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MANIFESTO

OF

Ignacio
GENERAL COMONFORT,

IN DEFENCE OF HIS POLICY

DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION

IN

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POLICY OF
GENERAL COMONFORT

During his Administration in Mexico.

THROWN on a foreign shore by the political storms of my native country, far removed from the whirlwinds of passion now raging in her, and an entire stranger to the conflicts of parties which are rending her to pieces, the time has arrived when I should explain to my fellow-countrymen and to the world at large the motives of my conduct during my boisterous administration, the political idea which at all times guided the acts of my government, and why the efforts which I made to give peace and liberty to the Republic were rendered fruitless.

When I left Mexico in February of the present year, I knew full well, that I left behind me a spirit of party which would persecute me with its calumnies even in a foreign land ; but I determined to keep silent, hoping that in course of time the passions would be calmed, and that at a more remote day when that agitation had subsided, my voice would be listened to with less prejudice, and my words would be better understood.

I have to this time kept my purpose, notwithstanding that the attacks of my enemies have more than once tempted me to swerve from it. But, as I perceive, that their malignities are incessant, and that deceit and calumny continue with relentless tenacity to throw their envenomed shafts against me, it is high time that I should break a silence which has not served to protect me from unjust accusations ; and which, moreover, may be unfavorably interpreted. I believe, on the other hand, that the period of my administration has been fruitful in wholesome lessons for my country, and that I should no longer hesitate in directing them to the attention of my fellow-countrymen, inasmuch, as by performing that duty, I defend the honor of my person and of my principles, responding triumphantly to those who have taken pleasure in reviling me.

I might confide my defence to the contradictory criminations of which I am the object, as the best justification I could give of my policy—emanating as they do, from the persons who have caused the misfortunes of my country. I might present myself before the parties, covered with the anathemas of the factions—accused by one of being a retrogradist, because I did not trample the social elements under my feet ; persecuted by another as a demagogue, because I held in my hand the banner of liberty : and I know full well, that this would suffice to induce the impartiality and good

faith of public opinion to do me justice, and to silence my detractors with shame. I also might abstain from all explanation, and answer with my silence the injustice of passion, if a personal vindication was the only thing at stake; because, compared with the misfortunes of a whole people, the sorrows of any individual of them is of little value.

But this is not the only object; the object is to vindicate ideas, which are sustained by history, the lessons of experience, and the march of centuries; ideas which are the partial dogmas of the present generation, and are to be the social condition of generations to come. And it is my duty as a public man, and the duty of my conscience as a citizen, to give the necessary explanations, that my contemporaries, as well as posterity, may have a data by which to judge me; and that they may not consider as vain and sterile, because it has had the misfortune to fail in the first essay that has been made of it, an idea which may save the Republic at a future day.

In the national movement which commenced at Ayutla in 1854, it was my lot to figure as one of its first leaders: that revolution having triumphed in September of the following year, I had to act an important part in the government which was then formed: and at a later day, when the first leader of the revolution of Ayutla saw that he could not arrest the storm which was gathering against his administration, and that public opinion pointed to me as the person to replace him, the weight of the supreme power fell upon my shoulders.

My name being invoked at that time as a pledge of conciliation for the parties; of security for the cause of order and progress; and of tranquility for the whole Republic, my advent to power in December of 1855, was a signal of pacification and concord: the movements which had already been initiated against the preceding administration, ceased at once; those who had taken up arms and raised the standard of rebellion, abandoned their hostile attitude; the discontent which on all sides had begun to spread, was calmed, and the general uneasiness which existed, was converted into a general hope. This was the first effect of my inauguration to the Presidency, because a hope was entertained by the nation that my government would not be the government of a faction, nor even of a party, but a government independent of all parties, and inimical to all factions.

Three different ways of action presented themselves to me:

1st. To leave things in the same state in which they were at the time the revolution of Ayutla triumphed.

2nd. To throw myself into the arms of the revolutionary principle, and introduce all the innovations exacted by it.

3rd. To undertake in a prudent manner the reforms claimed by a liberal opinion.

But the first of these three ways, was an absurdity and a crime : the 2nd, was no less an absurdity and iniquity ; and I could no more act upon either of them, than a man can act against the evidence of his own conscience, or the governor against the rights, the interests, and the opinions of the governed.

To act upon the first plan, it would have been necessary to destroy what had already been done when I took the reins of government in my hands ; and at that time the liberal revolutionary party had been converted into a government, and that government had already advanced greatly in an entirely opposite direction to the former dictatorship. Waiving for the present the immense difficulties which would have attended the undoing of what was done, I would have destroyed my antecedents, and forfeited my word by attempting it, and would have placed myself before my fellow-citizens as the leader of a new revolution, without an excuse, being without a cause and without an object.

By leaving things in the same state, I would have gratified the men who had just fallen, but it would have been at the cost of being disgraced in the opinion of all parties, and pass for an infamous Protheus, for whom an oath was but a vain word, and principles but a mere chimera. The Conservatives would have regarded me only as the continuator of a policy, which enlightened men of that party openly condemned ; because, by invoking their principles I would have injured them. By the Liberals I would have been looked upon as a refractory, perfidious, disloyal man, staining with black treason my opinions, my companions and my friends. In this manner I would most assuredly have prolonged the civil war, because the men of Ayutla finding themselves deceived, would have risen again, to continue against the restorer of despotism that struggle in which they had triumphed ; the nation would have supported them as it did before ; and the new despot could not have sustained himself long, having against him the evidence of his own conscience and the opinion of all honorable men. The result would have been to delay the triumph of the liberal revolution, and to increase the dangers of its being converted into a bloody and disastrous reaction. I would have involved my country in new calamities, and would have been covered with public disgrace ; this was an absurdity and a crime, against which good sense and conscience revolted.

To submit my policy to all the exigencies of the revolutionary element, was a step which offered no less difficulties for my honor and the peace of the Republic than the former. To innovate everything suddenly, without consideration to any right, to any interest, to any opinion, nor to any class, it was necessary that I should do what in other countries great popular commotions during short but violent paroxysms had done. I would have had to engage in a desperate struggle, not only with the classes affected by the revolution, but with the whole people who are interested in opposing such confusion. If I was to personify the rash, inconsiderate blind passious of a violent innovating revolutionary movement; if I was to overthrow all that was ancient without listening to the cries of those who adhered to them, regardless of those who might be buried under the ruins, I would have been obliged to do as these revolutions do, when, like a tornado, they pass over a people—launch with one hand the revolutionary battering-ram, and wield with the other the poignard of the demagogue; because those who destroy old and respected institutions, always encounter formidable resistance, and have to increase the number of victims in proportion to the amount of ruins they accumulate. Well, then, governments which deserve the name of government, never do such things; it is never done by men who are considered just. If the modern world owes anything to these tremendous climaxes, executed by a thoughtless mob, though they are at times the result of despair produced by oppressive governments; they have been, nevertheless, great iniquities, nor can they in any case be adopted as a political system. If I had acted thus, I would not only have raised against me the animadversion of my country, openly opposing the sentiments of humanity, which forms its distinctive character, but would have thrown a stain on the cause of liberty, for which I had fought, and for whose benefit the power which I exercised had been given me.—In any case, civil war would have been prolonged, and a wide door opened for the most violent reaction to invade the Republic.

Between these two extremes, there was a prudent and just means by which the country could attain its wishes, and this was the adoption of a prudent reform, which, satisfying the just demands of the liberal revolution, should not openly jar with the good conservative principles, nor with the customs and religious opinions of the people.

The principal mission of my government was to remove pretexts for a reaction, and nothing was better calculated to effect this end than to reform what already existed in order to preserve it, and to

advance in the path of progress without precipitancy and without violence. I thought then, as I always have thought, that the cause of all conservative reactions has been the exaggeration of the revolutionary principles, as all revolutionary reactions have been produced by the exaggeration of the conservative principles. Consequently neither of these two principles was to be admitted in my policy to rule in an exclusive and absolute manner, though both were to be received in whatever was good in them, as representatives of legitimate interests and respectable rights. It was necessary that the spirit of progress should be presented as measured in its wishes, as temperate and just in its action, in order that it might recover the consideration it had lost by the impatient order of other times, and it was necessary also that the traditional spirit should not, as in other instances, degenerate into a state of decay or retrogression, so that the friends of liberty might agree to it and accept it.

Moreover, the basis of my policy were clearly pointed out by the character of the occurrences which had just taken place, and also by the state of the public mind at the time. The revolution of Ayutla had triumphed, and the first government of Ayutla had disappeared; and these two facts had a meaning which I could not misunderstand. The triumph of Ayutla was more indebted to the force of public opinion than to the force of arms; and this I may assert without in the least detracting from the glory of my valiant companions who struggled heroically in that noble undertaking. Without the efficient support of public opinion, a poor and weak revolution which at first inspired more fears than hopes, could never have succeeded against a strong and rich government which was supported by powerful classes. As regards the difficulties raised against the first government of Ayutla, they likewise were the workings of public opinion, and were such difficulties as the government, notwithstanding it could still dispose of all the strength of the triumphant revolution, could not overcome. Thus public opinion, sustaining the men of Ayutla against the dictatorship of Santa Anna, had shown in an unequivocal manner, that it was not in favor of a unitarian tyranny, nor an exaggeration of order, nor the domination of any class, but was in favor of liberty, of reform, of equality, and of free institutions; and that self same public opinion, by rejecting the policy of Gen. Alvarez, rising up against it and taking up arms to overthrow it, had also clearly shown that it was not in favor of demagogical tyranny, nor for exaggeration of liberty, nor for the predominancy of any faction, but in favor of order, of the preservation of the good tradi-

tional spirit, of good ancient institutions, and of good social elements.

Such were the occurrences that had just taken place, and such the state of public opinion when I ascended to power. All the desires of the public mind had been reduced to these two words—*Order* and *Liberty*. The country wanted order but not despotism, liberty but not licentiousness, reform but not destruction, progress but not violence; and by desiring this, and expressing its will in the resolute manner in which it did, it had undoubtedly fixed the basis of the policy of the government. That policy, to answer to those aspirations, had to be a comforter of all the past misfortunes, conciliatory of the present interests, and protector of all the future hopes; and I adopted it, not only because these were the general wishes of the nation, and these her hopes when she selected me for her supreme ruler, but because this had always been my manner of thinking in political matters, having seen in a palpable manner the bitter fruits of the exaggerations in each of the vicisitudes which until then had afflicted the republic.

The remarks thus made will appear unnecessary and even tiresome to those who ignore what has passed in Mexico during the last two years. It will appear incredible to them that a governor should be under the necessity of exerting himself so much to prove that he did right in not being either a retrogradist or a demagogue. Nevertheless, the fact is, that for not having been a retrogradist, a cruel war was carried on against me by those who called themselves partizans of order; and for not having been a demagogue I was much calumniated by those who call themselves the friends of liberty in my unhappy country. This is the reason why I have devoted so much time to these trivial reflections; for being as they are the explanation of my political opinion, they also explain the difficulties of my government, the cruel war that was waged against me by the factions, and the cause of my fall. These remarks show that having extended a friendly hand to the partizans of liberty, and a protecting hand to their adversaries, the former had no reason to raise obstacles in my way, nor the latter to attack me with arms in their hands; and finally having raised in my country a flag of conciliation between the parties which divides it, no one will be able to see in the ranks of my accusers but exclusiveism, intolerance, and the sanguinary systems which are the scourge of nations. But if the republic was not so deeply interested in this matter, the attacks and calumnies by which my enemies would insult me, would not affect me so much, for it is not an affront to me, but is the glory of my administration to have in-

curred the odium of retrogradists and the hatred of demagogues.

Although the circumstances of the times and the state of public opinion clearly pointed out to me the path I should follow, still this fact did not remove the difficulties which I was to meet in it. My government received as an inheritance a sad legacy; the nation was drained by the dilapidations of dictatorships, and by the ravages of war; relaxed by the maxims of despotism and by anarchical doctrines, and weakened by misery and discord. I therefore had to struggle without means against formidable enemies, and that struggle was to be without a truce or cessation. I was going to fulfill the promises of Ayutla, and the fulfillment of those promises were reform, peace and legal order;—the reform which was opposed by all those who lived by abuses; the peace, which did not answer the interests of those who prospered amid contentions; legal order, which was rejected by the friends of revolutions; and the country was full of privileged classes, of disturbers of the peace and revolutionary spirits. Therefore it is that the life of my government was to be a life of contradictions and of battles, from its first moment to its last breath.

If I had limited myself to the literal fulfillment of the promises of Ayutla, the enemies of that revolution would have had no cause to complain, neither would they have reason to thank me: but I did much more than was my strict duty, and what I did beyond my duty will always be a reproach against those who were not thankful for it. My principal duty was to fulfill the promises of Ayutla, but it was not my first care; my first care was to moderate the violence of the conquerors, and protect the vanquished, because I did not wish that the cause of liberty should be stained by revenge. That is the reason why I always proclaimed the principle of tolerance and respect towards all opinions, and that was why one of my first acts was to bring to trial before the first court of the nation the Dictator and his ministers, to allow them all the means of defence they might require, that it should be justice and not passion that condemned them for the excesses which public opinion accused them of.

I may be permitted to state that this is the first example of moderation presented in the history of our deplorable dissensions. In Mexico a new government, emanating from a revolution furiously attacked and harrassed, had never been seen engaged in protecting its opponents with as much solicitude as that embarked in the fulfillment of the programme of its friends.

Nevertheless, the spirit of party exerted itself to raise against me both the clergy and the army, pretending that my administra-

tion was opposed to both those classes ; and although their efforts failed in the attempt by reason of the good sense of those appealed to ; they succeeded nevertheless, to find some individuals among them who proved to be most powerful instruments of their designs. It seems to me unnecessary to show the absurdity involved in that supposition, it being evident that a government who understood the necessity of being supported by the religious sentiment and the armed force of the country, to establish therein the benefits of a pacific democracy, could not be an enemy of the clergy nor of the army. But as in reality it was from these two classes that the strongest attacks directed against my administration have proceeded, and as it was by their combined efforts that my idea of putting a final end to the vortex of revolutions in the republic was frustrated, I will examine this point in a brief manner, because an explanation of the events which occurred during those two years are found in it, and it is the key by which to decipher the enigma offered by those occurrences.

That the influence of the clergy in political matters was a necessity in other times, and a benefit to society ; that the history of the catholic clergy is the history of civilization, and that Mexico owes great benefits to the Mexican clergy, are truths that cannot be denied by those who have read history. But that the times have changed ; that the nature of that influence has changed with the times, and that public opinion has undergone a similar change in regard to that influence, is also a fact that cannot conceal itself from those who see the state of ideas in the present century and the character of the revolutions in Mexico. The political influence of the clergy is considered there as pernicious both to religion and society ; and its wealth and privileges are causes of great alarm, objects of great temptations and even pretexts for deep hatred. New economical doctrines and new political maxims have risen up against that accumulation of wealth and privileges in a single class ; and though it is true that impiety wishes to impoverish the clergy and humble them, from hatred to religion, it is also true that many, though good catholics, and some for the very reason that they wish the advance of catholicism, invoke the principle of repealing the *mortmain*, (desamortizacion) and equality of justice in favor of ecclesiastical reform.

When I ascended to power, I found this opinion already formed and powerful in regard to the clergy : it was a fact which necessarily would become complicated with my policy, because it was the principal subject of public controversies, the battle horse of the parties, and the daily fuel to the passions. What was I to do

in the presence of this fact, more powerful than all the opposed interests, than all the prejudices overcome, and more powerful than the will of all the governments? The revolution existed there, terrible, threatening, ready to destroy what the government could not reform. I had thus far succeeded to hold it in check, but I could not answer for the results should I commit the imprudence and the injustice to oppose its rational tendencies. It was, therefore, necessary to undertake the reforms relative to the clergy with a view to satisfy great religious, social and political wants and to satisfy as much as possible public opinion in order to avoid a disastrous reaction.

This is not the proper place to prove the appropriateness of the laws which were issued with this view, nor to reply to the attacks of which they were the object. It suffices for my purpose to declare that, considering the circumstances under which the republic was then placed, those reforms would have saved religion from serious dangers and society from great disasters, if those interested in them had contrived to realize my intentions. The abolishing of the privileges would have prevented the hatred which they produce from falling upon the privileged class; the confiscation was likely to become a remedy against the misery by which millions of individuals in Mexico are suffering; the law of parochial dues would have restored to the clergy its title as father and consoler to the unfortunate; that of civil registry would have prevented any inconsiderate authority from promoting for the future conflicts between the two powers.

Such, at least, was the end to which those laws were tending. If I did not attain it, it was not my fault, but that of those who, under their pretext and sacrilegiously invoking religion, laid waste the fields, set fire to the villages, and violated even the temples, deluging the whole republic with blood and sorrow.

The government had obeyed an imperious necessity of circumstances by decreeing these reforms; but, however, it did not neglect a requisite which, by respectable opinions, was regarded as necessary. It sent a Minister Plenipotentiary to Rome to settle harmoniously with the Holy See, those extremely grave questions, and by this act it triumphantly replied to the accusations raised against it by its enemies, of being persecuting and anti-catholic; whilst the latter, by making all possible efforts to prevent the reception of the Mexican Envoy in Rome, proved that they did not want concord between their government and the chief of the church, and that the religious question was in their mouths only a pretext for continuing to envenom the political question.

Heaven grant that these conflicting elements may not produce hereafter the most dangerous consequences! I, for my part, did all I could to avoid them, and my conscience is quiet, for I firmly believe that if the catholic clergy has civilized the world, and if the Mexican clergy has civilized Mexico, it was not because they had privileges and property, and because this property consisted of plantations or existed under any other form whatever, but because with or without privileges, with or without property, they fulfilled in society a sublime mission as ministers of an eminently beneficent and civilizing religion. With the above explanation let history and the world pass their judgment.

But if the hostility shown towards me by some individuals of the clergy was not based upon any justifiable grounds, the war declared against me by a portion of the army is still less justifiable, for there was no pretext for it.

The army had been the most constant supporter of the dictatorship, and the most docile executor of the frequent atrocious measures of that government. For this reason there was in many of the men of Ayutla a certain hostile disposition against the individuals belonging to the army, and even markedly hostile intentions against the whole class; and these tendencies were distinctly manifested in the days of triumph, when the victors believed themselves to be able to satisfy their anger against those who had retarded victory. The truth is, that a formal project of destroying the army had been conceived and would have been carried into execution but for my interference while minister of war, to which end I made incredible efforts, and succeeded at last in appeasing the effervescence of the moment by promising that the institution would be reformed according to the necessities and the spirit of the times.

Afterwards, and being already charged with the Presidency of the republic, I not only employed myself to remove that discordance between the army and the liberals, I not only wished to unite them in a close alliance, but I also exerted myself to form them in one and the same cause. To this purpose I treated as friends the notabilities of the army so much held in horror by the revolutionists who had raised me to power, and I embraced as brothers the men who most furiously had fought against it, and who had the most signalized themselves by their zeal in favor of the past tyranny. What did they do as a return for this generous conduct? They revolted against me, and exerted to my injury the confidence I placed in them.

There is nothing more repugnant and scandalous than those

traits of perfidy by which several officers of the army answered my call. As chief of a revolution which had triumphed at the price of a thousand sacrifices, and head of a government which had just sprung up out of it, I opened my arms and bestowed my confidence upon the generals of the dictatorship, who had been our mortal enemies. These men, still bespattered with the blood of the battles in which they had fought against us, with the libels they had launched upon us still on their lips, came into my presence, astonished at a proceeding they did not expect, because they did not understand it. I gave them soldiers, arms and money, in order that they should pacify the republic. They accepted the mission and the confidence, took leave of me with demonstrations of thankfulness, went out of the doors of the palace with the air of loyalty, and were no sooner in the open field than they pronounced against me, with the soldiers, arms and money I had given them for pursuing the other rebels.

This is what occurred, and thus was formed the first reaction of Zacapoastla, which a little later planted its tents in Puebla, where it was powerfully aided with money by the clergy of that diocese. Over 5,000 men assembled there in February of 1856, under the command of those chiefs, who could not rebel without being perfidious, and of others who could not act thus without being ungrateful.

I marched against them at the head of the National Guard and a part of the army which had remained faithful. Public opinion supported our cause—God blessed our efforts and we conquered. The rebels being in my power and at my discretion, in virtue of a capitulation I granted them, my friends and companions who had aided me in obtaining the victory, insisted upon an exemplary punishment being inflicted on them; but I replied to this clamor by a decree which was more a threat than a chastisement, which was abolished a few days afterwards, as I did not wish them to consider themselves humiliated even by a threat.

What happened after that? The principal chiefs of the revolution took refuge in the capital of the republic, and from amongst them arose the chiefs of another reactionary movement, which in October of that year broke out also in Puebla.

At that time the loyal troops were again victorious, and the government accorded a capitulation to the conquered. Victory was not soiled with blood; for the victories of the government never were stained with blood. The blood of the unfortunate Orihuela will cry only against those who compromised him in a foolish enterprise, and against the horrible system adopted against me of

violating without remorse the most solemn compacts. The chief of the rebels fled from Puebla as though he feared to be protected by the guarantees of the capitulation; surprised without said guarantees in his flight by a party of troops, he was shot before the government had time to pardon him, and thus the country beheld the first and only victim sacrificed by the law instead of the multitude immolated to its rancor and its vengeance by the reactionists.

What happened afterwards? The rebels again took refuge in the capital, when another reactionary *pronunciamiento* broke out in San Luis, and the government being again victorious at Magdalen, showed to the conquered clemency and generosity. The most rancorous fell into its hands; and, not content with pardoning them, acted towards them in a manner that had never been witnessed in the civil wars of the republic, going even so far as to efface temporarily all hatred from their hearts.

What then had I done to the army that a portion of it persecuted me with such unextinguishable hatred? I restrained the revolution, lest it might wreak its vengeance on it; I honored the class and the individuals as much as I could honor them; I pardoned those who had offended me, and treated them with such consideration as to make my indulgence appear like imbecility; I wished to give the army splendor, credit and popularity, by making it the hope of the nation and the support of her liberties. And what was the result of all that? The opprobrium of the rebellions I have just enumerated, the infamy of those conspiracies which were always plotting, and lastly the defection of the 20th of January—the greatest of the disgraces which that epoch has witnessed.

Thus far I have spoken of my policy with regard to parties and the classes of society which exercised the most influence on the destiny of the country—a policy which might have been any other than that which I have just indicated, according to the opinions of the President, and according to his understanding and appreciation of the circumstances of the republic, the state of public opinion, and the character of existing ideas. It remains now for me to speak of my policy as chief of a government which had to fulfill the promises of Ayutla—a policy which had not been left to the prudence or discretion of the Provisional President, but which was to be religiously observed as referring to strict duties which were expressly pointed out in the plan of that revolution. By what I am going to say it will be seen, that while accomplishing these duties I had always in view my design of conciliating order with liberty, and that I never took a step that had not for

its object the discovery of the solution of this most important problem. The principal promise of Ayutla was to give a constitution to the republic; consequently, the principal duty of my government was to realize that promise.

Full of respect for the liberty of popular elections, the idea did not for a moment occur to me to use influence in those for the election of the constituent Congress in conformity to the edict issued by my predecessor. The result was very soon revealed to me that in that body there prevailed exaggerated elements which could not be well reconciled with my temperament and conciliatory policy. Nevertheless, I did everything in my power in order that the deputies should meet in the capital; I presided at the installation of the Assembly, and opened its session in February, 1856.

The project of a constitution, which was published in a few days, came to confirm my fears of an evil result; and these fears, which were those of all unprejudiced men of the liberal party, were so many causes of joy and hope for the reaction, which foresaw, from that moment, that it would find in the action of the constituent Congress one of the most plausible pretexts it had ever possessed to make war against the government of Ayutla. In despite of this, I protected with all my power the liberty of discussion; and the voice of the government was not heard in that precinct except to give wise counsels to the deputies, and to oppose with the practical knowledge which it had of the circumstances of the nation, the innovating spirit which would compromise liberty with its exaggerations.

The labors of the Congress came to light at length, and it was seen that it was not what the country wished and stood in need of. That constitution which ought to have been the bow of peace and the fountain of health, which ought to have settled all questions and ended all disturbances, tended to excite one of the greatest political tempests that has ever afflicted Mexico. Under its action the executive was left disarmed in presence of its enemies, while they found in it a formidable pretext for attack on the government. Its observance was impossible; its unpopularity was a palpable fact; the government which united its fate with it was a lost government. And, nevertheless, I promulgated that constitution because it was my duty to do so, although it did not meet my views. The plan of Ayutla, which was the law of my government and the title of my authority, did not confer upon me the power of impuning that code: it directed me simply to accept and publish it; and this I did with the conviction that it did not fill the purpose for which it was conceived, but with the hope that

it would be reformed according to the demands of public opinion, by the means which were pointed out in its provisions.

This step was the signal for new troubles and new struggles. The bishops protested against the constitution of 1857, prohibited the faithful to swear allegiance to it, and launched excommunications against those who did so; the doors of the churches were closed against the government in the capital, and in many other places to the authorities; the reactionary propaganda spread from the sanctuary to the domestic home; through the streets and public squares, and it went to reinforce the almost extinct ranks of rebellion which wandered through the country; and that reaction which had been conquered in every place and in all former combats, was seen to open a new field of action, and found itself equipped with new arms, having succeeded in its object of finally converting the political question into a religious one.

In the midst of so many difficulties, the government continued to labor with faith and with constancy for the establishment of constitutional order, notwithstanding that it saw that the reaction had taken such gigantic proportions. More than once tempting words were murmured in its hearing on the part of those who, in such exhausted circumstances, should have undertaken to appease the tempest which thundered over their heads, and which threatened to submerge the hopes of the nation in a general shipwreck; but the government turned a deaf ear to those suggestions, because it considered them the more dangerous the more they seemed to flatter the interests of the authority which it exercised, and which that constitution had cast to the ground. I thought that a new revolution, consummated by the government itself would bring upon the country greater misfortunes than those which afflicted it at the time; it appeared to me that legality, although it was no more than a shadow, was better than a state of revolution, whose first fruit could be no other than to destroy the influence of those who created it; to increase the confusion in which we found ourselves, and to exacerbate the passions which burned like a volcano throughout the republic. The country had already too often seen its dictators extending their term of power, and breaking their word under the pretext of guaranteeing public order; no one could ever believe in these pretexts so frequently brought forward by ambition; and as regards myself, I could never comprehend that faithlessness and perjury would remedy the evils which we suffered. For this reason, I always closed my ears to the intimations which were made to me, to cut short, by a *coup d'état*, the difficulties created by the constitution.

Thus passed the greater part of the year 1857: the reaction gaining ground, the government struggling incessantly against it, and myself making every exertion to save the republic by lawful means.

In the meantime, the elections for the constitutional Presidency had been held, and the nation had honored me with its suffrages to occupy that position—giving with this an evident proof that my policy was consonant with the public wish. The elections of deputies to the first Congress were also made, and I had installed it and opened its sessions, in accordance with the constitution. My government had also abstained from using its influence in those elections, and very little was done by the men who could have exerted beneficial influences under the then existing circumstances to carry them, and correct the errors of the constituent Congress. The result was, that in the first Constitutional Congress there prevailed, as in its predecessor, elements of irritation which could not be favorable to my conciliatory intentions; and this circumstance diminished in a great measure the hopes which I had entertained that the reforms in the fundamental law which public opinion demanded would be made.

That assembly, nevertheless, had the most sincere desire of overcoming the existing difficulties, subordinate always to the invariable idea of not departing one jot from lawful order; and this disposition was obviously manifested when, in acquiescence to the indications of my government, it extended the power of the Executive, suspending some of the articles of the Constitution.

The situation, however, was one of those that could not be saved by good wishes; and although the good wishes of Congress could not have been more patriotic, inasmuch as in its opinion it could not do more than to confer extraordinary power on the Executive, yet this act was not sufficient in the state at which things had arrived. That vote of confidence was a signal honor for me, and the extraordinary powers would have been sufficient to avert an extraordinary danger, but the dangers of that time were more than extraordinary—they were extreme; and they could only have been avoided by the union of the men of progress under a single will; but, unfortunately, they were divided respecting the Constitution.

I determined in despite of everything, to sustain legality or succumb in the attempt so long as the salvation of the country did not advise the adoption of other means, and I caused the initiative measures which were to be presented to Congress for the amendment of the constitution, to be prepared. But public irritation had arrived at its culminating point; as soon as the extraordinary powers were

granted to me, the reactionary press let loose the bounds of its fury and loaded me with insults. Instead of finding in the progressive press, a decided and frank defence, it remained a passive spectator of those insults, and consented, that in the name of liberty I should be reviled in incendiary publications, with more impudence and more bitterness than in those of the reaction. The constitution was daily infringed by the State governments and by the legislatures, some times because it was impossible to observe it, and at others because there was an interest in infringing it. The principal military chiefs, the authorities of most influence in the capital and out of it, and the most prominent persons of all parties, pointed out to me, incessantly, the critical state of the situation, and the necessity of getting out of it by means of a decided measure. In the Constitutional Assembly there was being formed an opposing phalanx, which not only placed difficulties in my way, but on more than one occasion, poured forth, through their speakers, the most violent outcries against my government and against my person. The enemies of liberty daringly advanced against the government, because it shared in the hatred which the constitution had inspired, and the partizans of this code could give me no efficient aid in that desperate struggle. In a word, the constitution strengthened my enemies while it weakened my partizans, because it had given arms to the reactionists, and had introduced disensions in the ranks of the liberals. I thus found myself alone in the capital of the republic, with the purpose of sustaining the order of things which could no longer be saved by sterile wishes, but by the employment of physical force only. I could only depend upon one body of troops, the Zuloaga brigade, which was attached to me personally

The Zuloaga brigade, on the 17th of December, declared itself against the Constitution of 1857.

From that day the situation was eventually unsustainable. Until then, I had been able to justify on good grounds my wish to sustain the constitution. The pledges given, the promises of Ayutla, the fear of increasing conflicts, the hope of remedying them—all strengthened my resolution not to abandon legality; but from that day everything was changed in appearance, and my efforts in favor of a fundamental law, which had already been broken to pieces, would have been as useless as they would have been dangerous. Until the 17th of December, I was not at liberty to abandon my promises on this point, but from that day the cause of Mexican liberty raised itself against them before me, and I had to sacrifice to it my name, my fame, and the position which

my recent election to the Presidency of the Republic assured me.

The Zuloaga brigade annulled the constitution by its *pronunciamiento*, and I was named chief of a new provisional government. With the first step a revolution was made, which apparently was the result of circumstances; with the second, it showed that its movement was not opposed to the principles of liberty, because the brigade well knew that I would not come to terms with the reactionists. The explicit protestations which the chiefs made to me, left no doubt upon this point, which was finally settled in the conferences which they had with me, under the express condition that no party should rule in the new position, and that the government was not to abandon the path of a prudent reform, nor the conciliatory design by which it had been guided until then. Besides this, I feared that the retrograde element of the new situation would come into power if I refused to accept the position which was there given to me. Anarchy lifted its head in every part, and behind anarchy, I could see despotism beginning to appear, with its accompaniments of persecutions and vengeance, and with its intention of making the reign of liberty always impossible in my country. At the same time that I wished to avoid these calamities, it appeared to me possible that the Plan of Tacubaya would serve as a better aid to my political design than the past order of things; to reconcile order with liberty would be an easier enterprise when the intolerance and exclusiveness of the two reactionary elements should have disappeared from the scene, before the advent of an order of things as distant from the one as from the other extreme.

Impelled by these considerations, I accepted the revolution, and was placed at the head of the new order of things.

The partisans of the reaction chanted victory; and its organs of the press ridiculed the liberal party, believing it conquered. The partisans of the constitution united themselves to defend it, believing that the Plan of Tacubaya was a reactionary plan. The one and the other were deceived, because they cast into oblivion my antecedents and my principles. I proved it then, and I proved it afterwards, in a manner so distinct, that not even the vestige of a doubt could be left in the minds of those who were the least disposed to do me justice.

The reaction had deceived itself in believing that I had realized a change of policy in its favor; and in the midst of the hatred which it professed towards me, it had praises for me, while it believed me to be disloyal and inconstant. It was convinced of its error when the list of persons I named to form the Council of Government was published; and when it saw me resolutely refuse its

demands, it returned to its hostile position, and insulted me for the error it had committed.

This attitude on my part, in presence of the reaction, which endeavored to possess itself of the public offices, was not a mystery to my friends, the loyal partisans of the good liberal cause; and some States and military chiefs who had adhered to the *pronunciamento*, because they saw in my adhesion a guarantee for that cause, and who knew the difficulties of the former situation, renounced it afterwards to return to the support of the constitution, or to watch the unravelling of events in a prudent expectancy.

In regard to the coalition, the principal persons who figured in it were likewise deceived in respect to my intentions: they believed that I had abandoned my principles and perfidiously sold my fellow-partisans; and in their papers, and in their official documents they painted me in colors which could only have been deserved by treason. They had no reason for this; and the hatred of the reactionists ought to have been sufficient to justify me before the friends of liberty, if the excitement of those moments had not blinded them.

Firm in my purpose to reconcile order with liberty, and to establish upon solid bases these two indispensable conditions to public felicity, I could not enter into compacts of alliance with the reaction, because the reaction was despotism with all its results; neither could I conscientiously recede and adjust my policy to the tendencies of the alliance, because its fanaticism for the constitution of 1857, was an unconquerable obstacle to the realization of my ideas. This could be better obtained by the Plan of Tacubaya, whose spirit must necessarily be that of a spirit of progress, and in no manner could it be otherwise while I was to figure in it. For these reasons, I had formed the resolution of marching into the interior of the Republic at the head of the troops that had proclaimed that plan, and had already begun to make the preparations for this march, sure of finding a peaceful solution for the questions which divided us, when a new occurrence suddenly came to give another phase to the crisis which disturbed us.

The reaction had labored with an indefatigable ardor to convert that crisis to its profit; and it had succeeded. The Zuloaga brigade made a new *pronunciamento* on the 11th of January, disclaiming me, and exhibiting clearly the object they had in view.—The insurgents possessed themselves of the citadel, of several barracks, and of other important buildings; they were joined by the usual conspirators, the notabilities of the opposition for two years past, the men of Zacapoaxtla, of Puebla, and of San Luis. Doubt

was at an end; it was the reaction in all its development raising its head in the capital of the Republic, aided by disloyal soldiers, who audaciously threatened the liberal government, now abandoned by its partisans.

That occurrence was a new difficulty in the interminable series of those that had embarrassed my steps; and yet it gave me relief, as one who feels relieved of the pressure of a very heavy weight which crushes him. My position from the 17th of December, had been most distressing, not because I would ever have wavered in it, but because each one interpreting it according to his whim, and the passions being so inflamed in those days, few interpretations could be favorable to me. But from the 11th of January, my position was as clear as that of my enemies, because the *pronunciamiento*, bringing each one to his camp, and delivering up his banner, had given to each the part which belonged to him—to them to contend for despotism, to me to defend liberty. By declaring war against me, the reaction knew me better, and did me more justice than the alliance; the first knew that my sentiments, my name, and my life were identified with the cause of liberty, of progress and of reform; while the second insulted me, in supposing me capable of making common cause with the partisans of tyranny, of abuses, and of retrogression.

With the part of the garrison that had remained faithful to its duties, and some bodies of National Guards, I prepared for battle, taking the proper measures of attack and defence. Some days were passed in these preparations, during which I did as much as lay in my power to avoid that fratricidal war; but nothing could be done, because the antagonists did not wish to lend themselves to any rational and just arrangement, but insisted that the reaction was to triumph finally, and that the liberal cause was to acknowledge itself defeated. In this manner they raised against themselves the legal party they had abandoned; and I proposed to return to it, and to deliver the supreme power to whom the law designated, because the Plan of Tacubaya having been destroyed by its own authors, and the reactionary tendencies of the new movement being already evident, it was a lesser evil to return to the point of departure. I fixed upon this as the basis of all arrangements, because it was then clear that if the republic had not accepted the constitution of 1857, because liberty could not be established on solid basis by it, much less could it accept the Plan of the Citadel which enthroned despotism. With that plan there remained no hope of liberty, while with the constitution it was not impossible to secure order, since it could be reformed favorably

when the crisis had passed, and when the minds of men were undeceived as to its dangers. It was not then an inconsistency in me to wish in those moments that the country might find some hope from the constitution, instead of delivering it into the hands of the reaction which closed the door to hope; and in order that there should not remain even the least shadow of personal interest, and that this might not serve as an obstacle to a satisfactory arrangement, I not only offered to resign power, but to abandon the country.

Here I may make a remark which may serve as an answer to the report that there were views of personal interest in my conduct then. If paltry motives had impelled my course I would have done at that time precisely the contrary of what I did. My interest was united with the existence of the constitution, because I had just been elected President of the republic by the almost unanimous vote of the people, and that constitution ensured me a period of four years in the office of first magistrate, opening the door for re-election for another term. Consequently my interest would have counselled me not to accept the Plan of Tacubaya; and yet I accepted it. After the 17th of December nothing was easier for me than to have satisfied my personal interest, by satisfying the demands of the reaction so as to preserve myself in the first post in the State; and, notwithstanding, I repelled these pretensions. After the 11th of January it would have been easy for me to return to constitutional order, and occupy the Presidency according to law, in which case the forces of the coalition would have come to my aid; and, notwithstanding this, I did not do it. The truth is, that I sacrificed my personal interest, without considering it; and that, thinking only of the salvation of my country and of my principles, I made the still dearer sacrifice, of my peace, of my reputation, and of my glory.

Having lost the hope of preventing a rupture, I wished to save the inhabitants of the capital from the horrors of a bloody struggle, and with this object I proposed that the two belligerent forces should proceed to take up their positions beyond a radius of seven leagues distance from the city, to fight in the field, so that the disasters of battle might not extend to the peaceful citizens. My enemies absolutely rejected this proposal.

Since I could not preserve the country from the evils of a war, and the city from the spectacle of a battle in its streets, I endeavored at least to obtain an agreement that the rights of humanity should be respected, and that the moral and material interests of society should be preserved, as much as possible, while hostilities

were carried on. With this view I proposed that the prisons of the city, the hospitals and the cemeteries should be declared neutral ground, so that the prisoners might be safely kept, that the wounded might be attended to, and that those who might die in the encounter should be buried; but my enemies refused this also. I could do no more, nor they could do no less in favor of afflicted humanity and of offended society.

The 20th of January, 1857, which was to witness the last combat of my government in support of the liberties of the country at length arrived. I had mustered some 5,000 men of all arms, including those who were in the capital the day of the *pronunciamiento*, and various parties which had arrived from without. I had faith in the result of the struggle, and the sorrowful and shameful event which gave the victory to my enemies could never have entered into my calculations. Those who had been the first to commence hostilities a few days before were also the first to open fire next day upon the positions of the government. I resisted and attacked while I had men with whom to attack and resist; but the hour of a general defection had arrived, and it put a characteristic termination to the defections of two years. In the morning I had at my orders more than 5,000 men; at night there were not even 500; the rest had disappeared—some going to increase the ranks of the revolvers, and others dispersing about the streets. The deeds of that day are not to be related in this place, neither is the relation necessary for the understanding of that mournful catastrophe. On the other hand, I leave to others the task of judging of my conduct as a soldier; nevertheless, for the honor of my cause and of my principles, I have made the preceding remarks, in order that my conduct as a ruler may not be falsely judged.

While these events were passing, others occurred of the most weighty importance in the scheme of our policy. The President of the Supreme Court had re-assumed the supreme power in accordance with the constitution; had established the government in Guanajuato, and had been recognized by the majority of the States of the Republic. This had created a centre of union, round which the partisans of liberty might perhaps be re-united, while it would also be a hope of remedy for the evils of anarchy by which the country was threatened; and whatever might have been my opinion in this particular, it was my duty to place no obstacles in the way of that hope. I decided, then, to absent myself from the country for some time—accepting this sacrifice, which the circumstances of the time imposed upon me.

My continuance in the Republic at that period could not have been of any benefit—however strange this opinion may at first sight appear to those who know that in those moments, when liberty ran such great dangers, it was precisely the time when the assistance of all its partisans was more than necessary. It is true that I could have gone on combatting the reaction enthroned in the capital, because there were some that valued my name still, among the just and unprejudiced men of the liberal party. But I could not work in conjunction with the coalition; nor was it easy for it to accept with good will the offer of my services; nor was it decorous that I should work apart from it, and in my own name. The first was not possible, because, although the government of Guajuato was the constitutional government, and although I could respect the patriotic intentions of those who sustained it, I could ill lend my aid in support of an order of things which had appeared unsustainable to me but a few days before. The second was not easy, because there prevailed in the coalition men, principles, and tendencies which were decidedly hostile to me. These men had been during twelve days simple spectators of my struggle with the reaction in the capital, and they had not seen fit to aid me in that deplorable struggle—an evident sign that I, a representative of temperate liberty, of prudent reform, and of political toleration, could not then offer them services which might have been acceptable to them. The third was not decorous, for although I had no faith in the constitution, nor did I profess conformity of ideas with the men who defended it, I could not but remember that that government was the lawful government; and considering this, I could not without dishonor raise up a banner, and send forth armed men on my own account, although I should do it in the character of President, and although it was against a common enemy. I did not wish to tarnish my name, defending as good that which had appeared indefensible to me when accepting the Plan of Tacubaya. I was not called upon to make a fruitless sacrifice, exposing myself to a rebuff which would have been directed more against my principles than against my person. I could not, in short, give to my country the scandal of seeing me converted into a rebel. And one of these three things would certainly have occurred, if I had remained in the country after the unravelling of the occurrences of the capital. My presence in it could have only served to increase the elements of anarchy which were spread abroad on every side, and I could not count upon sufficient forces to extirpate them.

For these reasons, and for many others which arise from them, after having meditated on it well, and after a painful struggle with

my feelings, as a friend, as a patriot, and as a soldier, I took the mournful resolution of expatriating myself; and I am satisfied with the conviction, that this was the only sacrifice which in those moments could be made for my unfortunate country.

I have set down the preceding facts which occurred during the two years to which they refer, and which may prove beneficial to the country if the lessons they contain are improved. By them it will be seen that my constant solicitude in all the phases and vicissitudes of my political life was the realization of a political design, which I hold to be the only salvation of the Republic since it cannot be saved by the intolerance and exclusiveness of reactionary factions. In vain will it be said that that policy did not satisfy any party, and that for that reason they all abandoned me, for the truth is that this does not satisfactorily explain the bad fortune of my design: if it failed, it was because I sowed it at a bad time upon a soil made barren by passions, and it could not grow. But the seed remains there; and some day it will give fruit, when God shall be pleased to give to my country a government more successful than mine, which, advancing in the same path, will have the good fortune to arrive at the end to which I aspired.

This hope consoles me when I behold the nation again involved in the horrors of a civil war, tormented by the most fearful anarchy, and exposed to suffer anew the yoke of an implacable despotism. Everything that has happened among us since the first day of our independence seems to strengthen this consoling hope, and goes to corroborate in a palpable manner the acts of the last two years. The Mexican Republic does not desire despotism under any form. Has it not been struggling incessantly nearly half a century for the conquest of her liberty? And why has she so many times overthrown her governments but because some had tyrannized over her in the name of conservative principles, and others in the name of revolutionary principles? And from whence have those tyrannies come but from the diligent desire to make enemies of ideas which should be sisters—order and liberty—tradition and reform—the past and the future? And if this has caused all our misfortunes, and if for this so many victims have been sacrificed, if there is no other motive which causes the republic to be left behind when all the world is advancing in the path of progress, what is to be the remedy for so many evils but to convert into allies those ideas which the genius of evil has made enemies, and to induce the men who in good faith serve under these two banners unite like brothers?

This was my design during my administration, and this design

can not but meet with sympathy in a civilized and christian land, in which every humanizing tendency and every generous idea is in accordance with the character, the sentiments, and the credence of its people. They have tested all forms and proclaimed all principles, in conformity to the advice of class interests, of party spirit, and selfish ambition : I trust that they will some day embrace, with resolution and with faith, an idea which they have never put to the test, because neither the classes, nor the parties, nor the ambitious have ever inscribed it on their banners : to conciliate all legitimate rights and interest by the means of tolerance, of fraternity and concord ; for if Mexico is to be saved, it must be by this means, and not by hatred, persecution and blood.

I. COMONFORT.

New York, July, 1858.

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